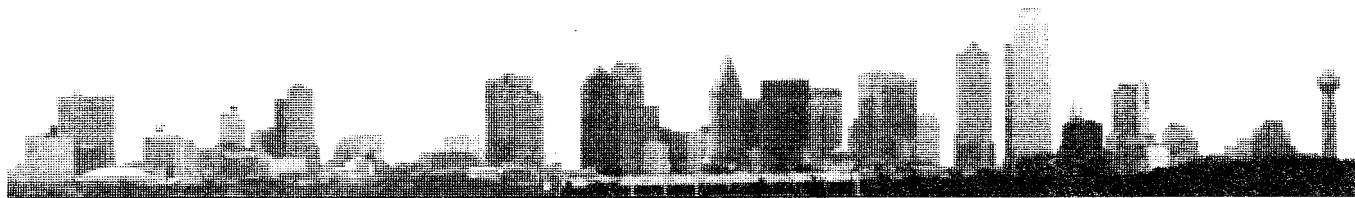


MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club



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Dallas

Final Writer

a professional word processor — release 2

© usenet review by Per Espen Hagen

Hardware Required

H 2 MB RAM required. More is needed for some operations; 4-6 MB should be sufficient for most users.

Hard drive required. A full installation requires about 10 MB of hard disk space, and a minimal installation 3 MB.

68020 CPU or better recommended.

Software Required

AmigaOS 2.0 or higher required.

Copy Protection

None. Hard drive installable (obviously).

Machine Used For Testing

Amiga 1200 with Blizzard 1230-II, 40 MHz 68030/68882. 12 MB Fast RAM, 2 MB Chip RAM. Toshiba 250 MB 2.5" IDE hard drive. Commodore 1940 and IDEK MF-5017 multisync monitors.

AmigaOS 3.0 (Kickstart 39.106, Workbench 39.29, SetPatch 40.14). MultiUserFileSystem 1.7 on all partitions.

Running commodities: Exchange, ToolManager 2.1, MagicMenu 1.29, CycleToMenu 2.0, The Promotor 1.14, SwazInfo 1.4.55, TitleClock 3, Yak 1.58.

AIBB performance rating vs Amiga 4000-040: 1.05 (integer), 0.67 (graphics), 0.47 (floating point).

Installation

Final Writer comes on seven floppies filled with compressed archives. The upgrade to Release 2 comes on one disk: a replacement for the original Disk 1. Installation is performed very comfortably with the standard Commodore Installer program. When upgrading from Release 1, only the updated files are installed.

The upgrade installation did not work for me — none of the files were copied! This might be due to my using MultiUserFileSystem, but I can't see why. I tried it

twice, with the same result both times. Instead of fiddling more with Installer, I performed the upgrade manually (unarchiving the new files from the Release 2 upgrade disk).

Introduction

Until about a year ago, I had not done any real word processing on the Amiga, and I didn't want to either. I was spoiled from using high-end DTP on Unix boxes at work: Interleaf, a publishing system which makes FrameMaker look like a toy, requires a HP 9000/735 to run reasonably smoothly, and costs thousands of dollars per license. Every word processor I had seen on the Amiga was so primitive it seemed next to useless. The best-looking one was Final Copy II, and the most capable was WordPerfect. The best was probably Wordworth 2, but it was very slow (I had only a 68020 CPU at 14 MHz then).

Fortunately, this has changed. Final Writer is here, and it's fast, modern, powerful, and easy to use. It's not in any way The Ultimate Word Processor, but it's definitely a good product. There. Now I'm done with the conclusion, so let's get on with the review. :-)

User Interface

SoftWood have understood one of the most fundamental rules in user interface design: different people want to do things in different ways. As a result, almost every function in FW can be performed in at least two ways, and often three or four. In addition, the user interface is very configurable. You can set up custom button palettes, add menu items and function key bindings, and specify defaults for almost all aspects of the program.

Final Writer can open screens in just about any mode and depth in the Amiga Screen Mode database, including those of some 3rd-party, RTG graphics boards. It can also run on the Workbench screen. Unfortunately, you cannot change the screen mode once the program is

running. Because the mode (or rather, the depth) that I want to use varies, I have configured Final Writer so that it asks me at startup. Final Writer will work on a normal PAL screen (640x256), but it won't look too good that way. Some form of high-resolution display is almost a necessity for this type of program. 640x480 resolution is OK; I use 800x600.

The user interface is not totally Amiga User Interface Style Guide (AUISG) compliant. SoftWood use their own gadgets and requesters, instead of the standard GadTools and ASL/Intuition ones. SoftWood's are similar but a little more "flashy" — actually, they look a lot like those of Magic User Interface (MUI) with XEN presets. I would have preferred the standard ones, but it's no big deal really. They also use an irritating, AvantGarde-type font in requesters and menus. This problem can be remedied by copying the font of your liking to "FWFonts/SWScrFont/13". The replacement font doesn't even have to be size 13! (This fix is just a kludge and not documented in the manual.)

You can have many documents open at the same time. Many of the special windows, like the Speller and Thesaurus windows, are "non-modal"; that is, you can leave them open and continue writing/editing the document. Some other special windows (as well as all requesters) ARE modal, though, meaning that you can't continue editing until you respond to them.

Word Processing Features

Before Final Writer, most word processors on the Amiga were OK for simple tasks like writing letters, but they lacked a lot of the features needed for large projects. In this area, Final Writer is by far the best word processor for the Amiga. A very important feature is Final Writer's PARAGRAPH STYLES. You can define styles for headings, sub-headings, normal text, and so on. A style can contain information about font name, attributes, and size, plus tabs, alignment, spacing and more. The style to use in the current paragraph can be selected in one of four

ways: menu, function key,

popup-menu gadget, or button. The style of

each paragraph is remembered, so that if you later change the definition of a particular style, all paragraphs with that style will be automagically updated. This is a basic and important feature in any good word processor — but

Final Writer is the ONLY word processor for the Amiga that supports it, as far as I know. Final Writer Release 1 had a bug which

made it difficult to use more than seven styles, but this appears to have been fixed with Release 2. Another problem with styles is that any attributes used in parts of a paragraph (e.g., italics) will be removed if the paragraph styles are changed. This has reportedly been fixed in Release 2.1 (which I haven't received yet).

Final Writer can handle "sectioned" documents. Each section can be like a document on its own, with its own page setup and paragraph styles. In addition to one or more "Main" sections, a document can contain several pre-defined, special sections — Outline, Table of Contents, Table of Illustrations, Bibliography, Endnotes, and Index — that can be generated automatically at any time.

Like any other good WP, Final Writer also supports a spelling checker, a thesaurus, and document statistics (word count, average word length, etc.). The spelling checker in my UK version uses British English — I don't know what the US version is like — and works very well, and the user can add new words to the spelling dictionary.

There are lots of other features I won't go into here, like master pages, mail merge, and even a very simple calculation function. The standard Amiga clipboard is supported — you can select and copy text from a Shell window and paste it into Final Writer, for example.

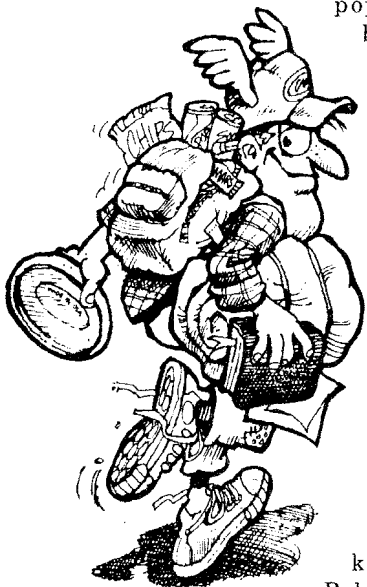
Fonts And Graphics

Final Writer can use three types of fonts: Agfa Compugraphic (the Workbench standard format, as in CGTimes), Type 1 (PostScript), and SoftWood's own NimbusQ format. It's a bit annoying with all these font formats, but each has its own advantages. Compugraphic is the standard format and "should" be supported by any Amiga program. Type 1 fonts are very common on PCs and Macs, so there are vast numbers of them available, both commercially and in the public domain. The NimbusQ format isn't used by any Amiga word processor except those from SoftWood... but NimbusQ fonts are VERY fast.

Final Writer comes with over 120 fonts, all in the NimbusQ format. Most fonts come in four separate versions — Plain, Bold, Italic, and BoldItalic — so you can divide this number by four to get the "real" number of fonts. Nevertheless, the selection is very good and sufficient for most users.

The font requester does not have a preview box. All the fonts are shown in the manual, but it is a pain to look in the manual each time I want to try a new font. (This is why I made a font picture. When I want to view the fonts, I push a button in the Final Writer Tool palette, which runs an ARExx script, which in turn uses PPSHOW to display the font picture.)

As for graphics, Final Writer can import bitmapped and structured graphics (in IFF ILBM and EPS formats, respectively). These loaders are quite versatile. All kinds of IFFs are handled, including HAMS and 24-bit, and the EPS loader can import files saved from programs like ProVector, Multiplot, and GnuPlot. 100 EPS clip-art objects (some brilliant, some mediocre) are also supplied with Final Writer. Imported graphics can be scaled, with or without aspect ratio preservation, but NOT rotated. A somewhat annoying feature is that all IFFs are shown as



if they were NTSC format (approximately 5:6 pixel aspect ratio). Why can't SoftWood use the aspect ratio information stored in the IFF, like ImageFX and other programs do?

There are also some basic but quite useful drawing tools — lines, arrows, boxes, rounded-corner boxes, ellipses, and text blocks. These can be scaled, moved, and rotated. Graphic objects can be grouped and ungrouped,

Text input handling is critical for a word processor. Final Writer handles this "asynchronously" — all the time that's necessary is used to keep up with user input.

moved to the front or back, and text can be made to flow around or above each graphic. No you can't easily write text in a spiral like with Wordworth 3, but this can probably be done through an ARexx script...

ARexx Port

One of the best things about Final Writer is the ARexx port. It has approximately 200 commands. This is very good for a word processor. Having an ARexx port means you can create scripts to emulate many of the "unique features" found in other word processors, like Wordworth 3's "Text effects" mentioned previously.

Printing

The program can print to any Preferences printer, or to PostScript via SoftWood's own driver. I normally use Postscript. I don't have a decent printer myself, so I print to a Postscript file, put it on a floppy, and carry it to the nearest Postscript printer.

I tried printing the "Cindy" document shown in the first picture accompanying this review. First with colour PostScript to file: 11 seconds. Then I printed to a Preferences printer (HP DeskJet, redirected to a file by the CMD tool). This took 2 minutes in greyscale, 2:30 in colour. Not exactly zero time, but not too bad either considering the complexity of the document, and the output quality is excellent. (In case you haven't seen the picture: it includes a bitmapped, 256-colour picture, a colour EPS picture, and five or six different fonts.)

The PostScript driver can download fonts to the printer. It works in colour or grayscale, and you can set custom halftoning. The driver is OK, but it has its flaws. For instance, colour images are apparently printed only in 12-bit color (instead of 24-bit) and grayscale images in only 16 shades of gray.

Speed

Final Writer is very fast at most operations: IFF and EPS import and scaling, font loading, text input,

document reformatting, Postscript printing, and spelling. Text input handling is critical for a word processor. Final Writer handles this "asynchronously" — all the time that's necessary is used to keep up with user input. If you add text at the beginning of a long document, reformatting of the rest of the document is given a lower priority than displaying user input on the screen. This means Final Writer will at least be usable even on slow systems. There are few things more annoying than a word processor which can't keep up with user input.

Document scrolling speed depends entirely on screen depth and window size (pretty obvious?). Scrolling a 4 or 8 colour screen is very fast (at least on my system), and 16-64 colours will still give reasonable speed, but 128 and especially 256 colours really are useful only for viewing your results before printing. (This is the reason why I would like to be able to change screen depth while FW is running.)

Documentation

Final Writer comes with a very well laid out, 300-page, paperback manual. I believe the entire manual was written using Final Writer. The manual contains both a tutorial and a more "reference"-like section. The ARexx commands are described in detail. The appendices include printouts of all the fonts and clip-art items included with the package.

Release 2, being only a minor upgrade, comes with a four-page supplement to the manual. The pages are small, use a large font, and even include some pictures, but the new functions are covered adequately.

There is no on-line help. Not that I miss it, but I'm sure I would use it if it were there....

Likes

I like the speed, the graphics support, the high quality output, and the word/text processing features. I like the ARexx port. And the manual is good, too. Also, the price is very reasonable for a program this powerful. Upgrades are cheap. And I like... aw heck, it's much easier to list the few things I DON'T like. :-)

Dislikes And Suggestions

The things I "dislike" the most about Final Writer are the things which aren't there... at least not yet. These include: tables, equations, auto-number streams, floating graphics, footnotes, dotted tabs, RTF import...

Also, I don't really like the non-standard user interface (custom gadgets and requesters), even though it doesn't at all look ugly. And I dislike that graphics output is limited to 12-bit colour/4-bit grayscale.

Being Norwegian, I would like to see multiple-language support in Final Writer. I couldn't care less about localization (I use English Locale settings anyway), but I would like a Norwegian spelling checker and Norwegian hyphenation. There is actually a Norwegian version of FW Release 2 underway, but I think multiple-language support should be an integral part of Final Writer. With such a system, other languages could be supported simply by adding new "language modules".

Comparison To Other Similar Products

I guess Wordworth 3 is the only Amiga product that can reasonably be called similar. I have tried only the demo version myself. The two programs are very similar on the surface, but my opinion is that Final Writer has much more "under the hood" than does Wordworth. FW's text formatting abilities (especially the Paragraph Styles) are hugely superior to those of Wordworth. Wordworth has a few advantages over Final Writer, but almost all of them are in quite unimportant areas: Text Effects, PCX graphics import, etc. Wordworth is slower, it doesn't support Postscript printing, and it doesn't have an ARExx port. It's interesting to see that virtually all the magazines that present Wordworth as comparable to or even better than Final Writer, are British. Outside Britain, Final Writer wins the comparison tests hands down. Does this have anything to do with the fact that Wordworth is a British program...?

PC owning friends of mine call Final Writer "Word for Workbench"; they say the user interfaces of the two are very similar, especially with FWR2. I haven't used Word much, so I don't know how to compare the two.

Bugs

None worth mentioning. (I can't think of ANY right now, but I'm sure there are some).

Support

SoftWood have listed phone and fax numbers in England for technical support (for the UK version). At least one of the programmers (Pat Brouillette) is on the Net and answers questions on the USENET newsgroup comp.sys.amiga.applications.

Warranty

Only the usual 90-day diskette limited warranty.

Conclusions

Final Writer is a professional word processor, and it is best at home on a "professional" computer. It requires AmigaDOS 2.0, ten megabytes of hard drive space, a reasonably fast CPU, a few megabytes of RAM, and in reality, a high-resolution display too. Yes, it does eat quite a bit of hard drive space, but most of it is for data (fonts, clip art, dictionary, etc.), and this would be the same for any word processor. If all you have is an unexpanded A500/600/2000, Final Writer is not the program for you. If, on the other hand, you DO fulfill the above requirements, Final Writer is a program that will use your system to its full potential.

Final Writer is a fast, modern, powerful, and easy-to-use word processor with more than a slight touch of desktop publishing. It's not in any way The Ultimate Word Processor, but it's definitely a good product. (Deja vu?) I can recommend it to anyone with a half-decent Amiga setup.

On a scale from one to ten, I would give Final Writer an 8. It stands well above its competitors on the Amiga, but there's still plenty of room for improvements: tables, equations, footnotes, floating graphics... ✓

Thought For The Month

After All Is
Said And Done

-

A Lot More Is
Said Than Done

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Microbotics MBX1230

an accelerator card for the Amiga 1200
usenet review by Corinna Cohn

The MBX1230 card is an accelerator card for the Amiga 1200. It provides a 68030 CPU and room for a math co-processor and up to 128 megabytes of RAM. I purchased this card from Memory World as configured for about \$700.

Hardware And Software Required

Amiga 1200.

No special software requirements.

Copy Protection

None.

Machine Used For Testing

Amiga 1200. Commodore 1942 Monitor.

Microbotics MBX1230 with

68030 CPU running at 33 MHz

68882 FPU running at 33 MHz

8 MB RAM

Review

I bought this card at the World Of Commodore show in Pasadena, CA in 1993. At the time, there were two other 68030 cards for the A1200 which I was aware of. The GVP card seemed rather expensive, and the price of GVP RAM is far too expensive. The other card (which I believe to be the RCS card) had many attractive features (such as a future SCSI-II add-on); however, I couldn't justify spending extra money on features which I couldn't see myself using. So I ended up with the MBX1230 card.

I had used a MicroBotics product before in my Amiga 500 — a VXL*30 card with 68030 CPU and 2 MB RAM — and I was rather displeased with it. I was a bit skeptical of my new purchase, and shortly after I had it in my hands, I thought that I was a fool for purchasing it. It turns out that these thoughts were completely unfounded.

Once I got the card home, I began to install it in my A1200. I installed the software, and the installation was flawless. Then I tried to install the hardware which turned out to be quite a trial. The directions say to slide the card gently into place, but it took almost more force than I had to get it into place. Finally, just as I was about to give up, I thought to use a lever to get it in. When I used the lever, the card slid in very easily.

I then rebooted the computer and... IT WORKED! YEAH!!! My computer was now a LOT faster, and it had 10 megabytes of RAM too! That was the last time that I saw the card. It has been running in my A1200 ever since. As of this date (May 18, 1994), the computer has been turned off for a total of about four days. The bottom of my A1200 is quite warm, but I have had no problems with the heat as of yet.

Documentation

The documentation for this card is sparse but adequate to get up and running.

Likes

I like the SPEED! Of course you would get the speed with any other accelerator, but it's nice anyway. :)

The card was relatively easy to install. There aren't hundreds of screws to deal with (and lose). I would recommend a lever to get the card in though.

Dislikes And Suggestions

The card requires a patch at the beginning of the startup-sequence in order to add the "Auto-Config" RAM. They say that AmigaDOS 3.1 should fix the problem; however, this doesn't seem to be a problem with the other boards.

The card "supports" up to 128 megabytes of RAM; however, it has only one SIMM socket. Where do you find a 128M SIMM??? I have trouble finding 16M SIMMs! If there were two sockets, then I could just pop in another 8M SIMM, but I'm kind of stuck with 8M until I can find a 16M SIMM. I'm not even going to bother looking for 32M SIMMs.

Comparison To Other Products

I can't compare this product as I have never owned another accelerator card for the Amiga 1200. Compared to the VXL*30 card though, this is a MUCH better product.

Bugs

I haven't run into any bugs at all!

Support

I have not required support for my MBX1230 card; however, I did require support for my VXL*30 card and the support people were very friendly and responsive towards my needs. I don't think this will have changed much.

Conclusions

I would definitely recommend this product to any Amiga 1200 owner who doesn't have a need for SCSI support. I would also recommend that any low to midrange users who want to save a couple of dollars should omit the purchase of the 68882, as it doesn't help much with day to day use. If you are using math-intensive applications, it is important; however, that is a rare case for me (and I imagine for most people). I would also recommend that anyone purchasing an Amiga 1200 buy at least SOME kind of 32-bit RAM, at least 2M's. ✓

GigaMem

virtual memory management for the Amiga

© usenet review by Michel J. Brown

GigaMem (revision 3) is a virtual memory management program. It requires an Amiga computer with hard drive, a processor with an MMU, and at least 3MB of fast RAM.

[NOTE: This review assumes that the reader knows what virtual memory is. Briefly, it is a way to make a part of your hard drive act like memory (RAM). This increases the amount of RAM available on your Amiga, at the expense of some hard disk space and some speed (since hard drive access is slower than RAM access). — Dan]

List price

I do not know the list price of the product. The software was included free with my Oktagon SCSI host adapter which I bought for \$129.95 (US) from my dealer.

Special Hardware And Software Requirements

3 MB Fast RAM required. It is used for buffer space and data caching. A hard drive is required. Sizes up to 1 GB are supported. A processor with a memory management unit (MMU) is required.

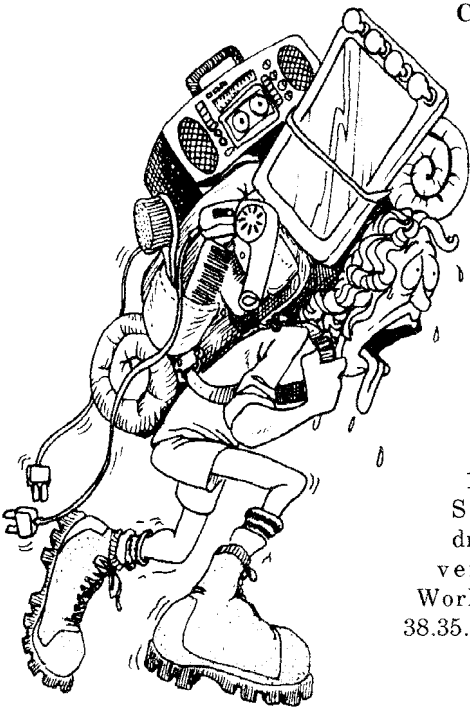
Works with all AmigaDOS versions. Some features are unavailable under older AmigaDOS versions. Full functionality is obtained with AmigaDOS 2.1 and above. Even though it is compatible with AmigaDOS 3.0, it doesn't seem to take advantage of any of the newer features present in 3.0 as far as I know.

Copy Protection

None.

Machine Used For Testing

Amiga 2500 (rev 4.5), 2 MB Chip RAM, 4 MB Fast RAM, Oktagon SCSI host adapter with Quantum 1080 Empire SCSI-2 hard drive. Kickstart version 37.300, Workbench version 38.35.



Installation

Installation uses the Commodore Installer and is very easy. I selected the Expert installation mode and found most of the defaults to be standard. Even Novice installation mode wouldn't have been much different. You can even choose the language in which the installation will occur: English is the default, while French and German are supported. If you have AmigaDOS 2.1 or above, locales are also supported. The Amiga Style Guide guidelines are completely supported throughout the entire installation.

Review

The documentation is written in a "German first, English second" booklet labeled "GigaMem." It is well written and includes both "step-by-step" and "expert" installation descriptions. Throughout the book are suggestions, warnings, and helpful tips about hard drive installation, use, and maintenance.

After selecting the appropriate mode, you can set the size of the virtual memory file or partition by using the intuitive editor. One caveat here, though, is that you must specify the size of the file in megabytes, so a partition swap medium would ghost out the choice for swap size. Once the size of the file or partition is set, then you have to select the amount of real RAM you wish to devote to buffers and caches. The recommended amount is that buffers should have one fourth of total RAM, and caches should be sized according to the largest file to be handled at one time. As an example, I give GigaMem 1MB of buffer RAM and 256K for caching purposes. Depending on the size and speed of your drive, you may want to adjust these accordingly, as they seem to be inversely proportional to the speed of access and use.

The documentation has several warnings about using the swap file method, as there may be conflicts with data and other files in the swap file area. I use the partition method, giving 175MB to GigaMem for virtual memory purposes. This ensures that the random read/writes to the drive stay in a controlled environment, and won't affect other files in any way other than to allow for larger than normal projects to be done.

GigaMem comes already set up to be used with several programs, like AdPro, Deluxe Paint (animation only), and Imagine. I have tested it only with AdPro, DPaint 4.1, Imagine 2.0, Pro Write 3.2, Scenery Animator 2.05, and UChessL. While all of these programs worked exceptionally well, with the one notable exception of DPaint 4.1, the greatest surprise came when I tried UChessL (V2.83) on my system. First of all, it requires a 68040 CPU and 8MB of free RAM, yet it booted cleanly and performed as well as the lesser versions without any

speed penalties. As to what happened with DPaint 4.1, it is anybody's guess. First, I tried a simple morph across 30 frames and promptly ran out of memory. Then I tried to concatenate a 750-frame animation generated by Scenery Animator, and it wouldn't even load the first frame, even though I set the frame count to 750 and selected the base name of the file without the frame count extension. Perhaps this is a problem with DPaint 4.1, as there have been quite a few patches released for different versions.

One caveat here in regards to speed of access and use. A friend of mine tested GigaMem on his machine, a stock A4000/040 with 8MB fast RAM and 2MB chip RAM. Due to his having a slower IDE drive and no burst mode, GigaMem slowed down his system to a bearable crawl, while my system went 3-5 times faster. The two controlling factors appear to be the speed of the drive and the speed of the RAM. On a fast system, this is a moot point, as my virtual memory speed tests somewhere in between Fast and Chip RAM. The A4000 showed its Fast RAM to be about half as fast as mine, and the Chip RAM about the same, while the virtual memory was dog slow (approximately one fifth the speed of Fast RAM). So for the need of working on large projects that are RAM intensive like image processing and rendering on a fast machine with a fast drive, GigaMem is a very cost-effective means to an end, without a great deal of expense in hardware.

All in all, this is a fine product from a supportive and growing company, and I would highly recommend getting the program if you are in the market for a fast and inexpensive method of RAM acquisition.

Documentation

The printed documentation comes in a 96-page perfect bound booklet, with the first half in German, the second in English. My congratulations to the writers for the excellent translation and low spelling error count. The documentation is very straightforward and covers every aspect of installation, use, and maintenance. All levels of expertise are covered, and beginners to experts alike won't be disappointed or confused by the nomenclature.

Likes

I like the ease of use, the intuitive system that is completely Style Guide compliant, and the use of advanced features from recent AmigaDOS versions.

Dislikes And Suggestions

About the only dislike I had was that in order to use a program, it has to be on the database, which is included. As an example, I tried to drag and drop (like an AppIcon in this respect) the icon for GVP's DSS8+ sound sampler hardware. Although it registered on the memory allocation counter in DSS, it wouldn't use any virtual memory whatsoever. What was really surprising is that there is support in the database for AudioMaster III/IV, and yet DSS is left out. I tried editing the AudioMaster

and DSS files manually, but was unable to get it to work. Since sound files can be quite large, and DSS is a pretty well established product. I cannot understand why it wasn't included, or why GVP won't allow for the use of virtual memory. Maybe in future releases we'll see it.

[Editor's Note: GigaMem will only simulate fast RAM. Any program that specifically calls for chip RAM will not be able to use GigaMem's virtual memory. This is not a shortcoming in GigaMem, but it can reduce its usefulness in certain applications due to limitations of the specific software being used.]

As for DPaint 4.1, I don't know why it wouldn't make even a small animation, like a morph, or even a large one of 750 frames from a Scenery Animator animation I did for a project. FRED, however came through, even though it uses Chip RAM for the thumb nails it generates to make the animation from the frames generated.

Comparison to other similar products

The only comparable product is the shareware product VMM040 which requires a 68040 processor, so I was unable to test it. My friend with the A4000/040 tried to use VMM040, and couldn't get it to work at all, as the documentation leaves a lot to be desired and assumes a complete knowledge of the inner workings of an MMU-bearing 68040 processor. Definitely not for the faint of heart. Other than that, I am not aware of any other comparable products that are generally available.

Bugs

None noted.

Vendor Support

Full addresses, and phone/fax numbers are supplied, but the hotline for technical support is sent back only after registration card is received by BSC. I am not associated with BSC/Alfa Data in any way except as a satisfied customer.

Warranty

One year warranty on software and the installation software. Warranty appears to be transferrable, as no mention is made either way as to the transfer of title.

Conclusions

This is an excellent product at a fair price, and considering the performance capabilities exhibited, I would hazard a guess that the faster your machine, the faster the throughput. According to SysInfo 3.14, I get a speed of my virtual memory in between the speed of my Fast and Chip RAM. It would appear that faster processors coupled with faster drives will produce the best results, naturally enough, but faster than your average comparably equipped machine. I'd give GigaMem a rating of 4+ stars out of 5 and a full five stars if they make the appropriate changes to the database, allowing use of Digital Sound Studio and DPaint 4.1. ✓

CHAPTER NEWS

Amiga Central

Johnny Kitchens

With the start of the second half of 1994 one thing is certain, IT'S HOT! On the other hand, news about Commodore has turned a bit cold after three months of rumors. As I was typing this, news of what's going on has started to move again. Let's hope it's good!

Due to an odd set of circumstances, Scott couldn't attend tonight's meeting. Come on, Scott — you could have brought her. With that, Harold Williams opened tonight's meeting by jumping directly into rumors. The story of the 6 bidders was discussed, and calling the *Amiga World* toll free numbers for the latest news. The rumor of *PageStream 3.0* release in 4 to 6 weeks seems to be true. Hasn't it always? 3.1 can be purchased from Expert Services by anyone. Strangely enough, 3.1 and *PageStream 3.0* are both delayed by manual printing. Think about it! There were several people interested in the future of the Amiga... something we may know soon. We had a user from Canada visiting tonight. The only person in the room who could say he has seen an Amiga 4000T! I guess that the thought of getting something else, if the Amiga follows the TI-99/4A into history, has begun to cross a few minds as we had a very long discussion on Unix. This brought up an interesting thing. Did you know you can get a 3000UX from CompUSA? More Commodore rumors flew, such as a few former Commodore employees trying to grab what's left of Commodore. We'll see!

Questions and answers were next in line. We had a question on booting a game in a 1200. Did everyone know you can choose your bootup drive now? The problem of adding extra hard drives to a 4000 was given discussion. How to convert MPEGs to another format

was given some thought. If you haven't been on the BBS in awhile you may have missed the large amount of files starting to move onboard.

Tonight Harold performed double duty — hosting the meeting and giving the show. Harold gave us a presentation of his ARexx programming skills to help an individual overcome a particular problem. One of our members, Jean Riley, uses her Amiga to type poetry. Due to cerebral palsy, her typing skills are limited somewhat, though obviously not hindered. Through the use of ARexx, Harold has succeeded in simplifying many of her word processing procedures. Typing operations requiring two keys have been simplified to the pressing of one of the F-keys. Also included were sounds to verify key-press actions and the use of the Amiga's speech capabilities to read the text. Though Harold has a ways to go, just the amount completed made for an impressive addition to the word processor. Harold had a few problems to overcome, such as the older OS in the 500. I would like to ask anyone who has a spare 2.0 or 2.1 ROM laying around that they could donate to this worthy cause to give Harold a call. Updating Jean's 500 to the newer OS could open many new doors for the project.

For a final note, our next meeting will be August 18th. Try and come out and bring everyone with you. This will be some meeting!

Amiga North Dallas

Genny White

We had over 20 people in attendance (and a handful of kids in the back) at our July gathering. That may be less than half the crowd we had in the good ol' days, but that's still a bunch of Amigaphiles, and the meeting was definitely worth the trip. Our president, Danny Barnett, has managed to get a new job, which

is good, but they have him on 2nd shift, which is bad. Danny, we'll miss you! Our very competent VP, Steve Nichols, stood in for Danny and ably handled the evening's events. The news, of course, was on the latest word on Commodore, and the hopes that Commodore UK (and their unnamed partner) will save the day and bring the Amiga back to the forefront where it began.

There were several questions of interest. My brother (remote member from Georgia) was having trouble getting an I/O card to work with his 386 bridgeboard, and he found words of wisdom from several. Another someone was inquiring about camcorder connections, and was referred to the Video SIG. Someone else mentioned a company making Very Expensive Amiga-compatible monitors, advertised in *Creative Computing*. A discussion of Where to Find a Monitor was held. Igor had seen some at Discount Electronics on Walnut Hill in Irving. Danny and I had a query about the *Galaga* game (we can't get the ship to show up!), and Tom Brooks says he has a 2.2 official version on his BBS. We'll check it out. Steve Nichols advised us that the Super Denise chip he bought to add new display capabilities did NOT work in his Rev. 3 A500. Here's a free plug for some fellow members making an Amiga do its stuff: Eric Watson and Darryl Jay of Clockwork Communications (234-6265) have been seen making videos and adding imaginative backgrounds for folks at the Grand Kempenski. Sounds like a fun application of all the neat video tricks we've seen the system do. I love to see any real application of the Amiga, instead of just demos and daydreams!

We had a special visitor a long way from home, with a special offer: Devin Trites of the AMiga Users of Calgary (AMUC) in Canada is here for a few months, and brought the CD his group produced. For \$20, you can get "lots and lots of public

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domain and freely distributable software, pictures, mods, fonts, etc. for the Commodore Amiga Computer." We hope to hear more from Devin in the coming months, especially about a BBS/terminal program for Amigas. You can check out the CD at the next meeting or so, or write to AMUC, P.O. Box 34230, #19-1200 37th St., Calgary Alberta T3C 3W2 Canada, or internet address "salesinstar.cuc.ab.ca."

Our very welcome guest presenter for the evening was Scott Lamb, author of the strategy war game *Operation Combat II* (among many other fine creations). Although the game itself was great and the demonstration of its capabilities interesting and entertaining, the best part of the evening was learning first-hand the evolution of the product, even the marketing ins and outs for this and similar games. The package was entirely Amiga-produced, with the manual done in *PageStream* (even the IBM version), and the graphics done with, among other things, *Deluxe Paint*, by our own Brett Hester. The code is in C, and is designed to run on a 1-meg machine with everything in memory. The IBM and Amiga games are fully compatible for playing with a friend over the modem, and the intent of the all-in-memory-at-once limitation is to prevent the necessity of a disk access triggered by a remote event. Both parties can save locally, but the one who initiates the next play of the game will send his save file over, so there is no problem with staying in sync. Action over the modem is just as fast as for the local user. You can play man vs computer on various levels, and Scott warns that the game is addictive! It took four months for this release to evolve from earlier versions, and it really looks sharp. The graphics for the 6 cell-based maps are outstanding...Brett outdid himself! I understand he actually used real images of grass for the background of his grassy areas,

for example. Each map offers 4 scenarios with different balances of ordinance. Terrain varies from desert to town to islands, each with its challenges. There's even optional random weather, with realistic effects on the travel capabilities of your pieces. I was especially fond of the smart-aleck-remark function, with which you can send a distracting comment during the opponent's planning and strategy phase. (This is innocently designed for inter-player communication about having to go to the bathroom, etc.) The most unusual feature of this hunt-em-down-and-shoot-em game is the fact that your tanks, infantry, etc. actually run out of ammo and fuel and **MUST** be RE-SUPPLIED... the supply trucks themselves even run out of gas if you don't plan carefully. The U.S. Army has used the game as a simulator, as the supply issue is so critical to real-life strategy. There are options galore to set things up to your taste, like air support on/off, double-fire (to choose fire/move/fire-again or just move/fire), a turn timer, and line-of-fire choices (can you shoot through a building or not?)

The history of the game was fascinating. An earlier game was played heavily over CompuServe. In 1985, only the *Microsoft Flight Simulator* and *Operation Combat* were designed to play via modem with another player! Today, other popular games such as *Doom* are designed for networking, but Scott was a pioneer. Sadly, he says this is probably his last game. In the good ol' days, back in the 80s, a single programmer did it all — coding, graphics, sound, etc. Today, big game producers spend a million bucks and have teams of programmers, artists and testers generating incredible applications. Marketing a privately-produced, limited market game in these competitive conditions is almost impossible. Shareware offers a

viable outlet for those who create something wonderful and want to share it with the world. Please support those who contribute their time and talent to the public pool...send em' the \$5 to let them know their efforts are appreciated!

As our evening wound down, we got a somewhat nostalgic tour of the Amiga's past, present and future from a guy who was there through it all. It was a very special opportunity. Lest I forget: *Operation Combat II* is distributed by Merit Software for \$14.95 (gasp!), and the kind folks at Metropolitan can hopefully get it for you, in the midst of this rather confusing state of affairs.

Our good Vice President/Acting President Steve Nichols brought us some door prizes! George Robertson happily went home with the *Flashback* backup utility, and Neil Carter (my little brother!) won the *Power Monger* game. Thanks, Steve, for your generosity! Steve's talking to several presenters for next month (back to 3rd Tuesday, folks), so we are sure to have an evening worth your time. See ya there!

Metro C-64/128

Brenda Sessums

Who knows what fun lurks in the meetings of C-64/128 users? The members know...ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! (Sorry, just saw some of "The Shadow" and couldn't resist!) Jo Lynn and Phil were both M.I.A. this month, so John Burt and Brenda picked up the slack and conducted a great meeting with 10 happy people.

John Burt demonstrated *Will Kit*, a shareware do-it-yourself will maker from Q-Link. (This is also listed in the club library under "Will" on Disk #353.) Basically, you select who the will is for from a menu. One example is "Married man with children." Then it will create a will for you based on some questions it asks. Then you select "edit" to add

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the names for the actual names in the will. If you say yes to having minor children, it will create a trust for you. What you see on the screen is formatted for the printer. That's why it looks so bad on the monitor.

A great little scale drawing package, *Cad 3.0*, is available on library disk #460. John gave a demonstration of the earlier shareware version, *FastCad 1.1*. You can draw up house plans and other detailed drawings using the joystick with this package. There are three menus on the program. Several drawing options and other functions are available from the "hot keys" on the menus. "G" draws a grid on the screen. Even though it makes it easy to line things up on the screen, the grid also prints out with your drawing! It takes three points to define an ellipse or a parallelogram. Only two points are needed for a hexagon. "R" is the hotkey for rays. You first select the anchor point for the single or series of rays you want to draw. Then you select the end point for the ray. To draw more rays, just click their end points. Small "i" gives you X and Y indexing along the left side and bottom of the screen. Some other features let you label the items in your drawing with text and zoom in for detailed pixel by pixel editing. You should also be able to bring your finished product into *Doodle* or similar art program to make your output even more spiffy.

John also demonstrated *Ware3 128* written by a 15-year old several years ago. He had a little trouble getting it to load, and finally discovered that <shift> <run> was the only way he could get it to load. One of the bugs John found was that "Set clock" allows you to set the clock, but it doesn't run most of the time. Of course, it worked just fine for the demonstration after he told us it wouldn't! John used this program to create a list of disks in the club library when he was librarian. Using this, you can create a listing of the

programs on all your disks, and then sort them alphabetically or other ways. Another bug is that if you load in a list of 1500 or more, it will crash. Maybe that's not as much of a bug as a imitation set by the programmer.

One of Brenda's all time favorites, *Majong*, was next in line for demonstration by John. The original game of "Majong" was from China and played with four players — each player represented a wind direction — north, south, east, and west. The tiles used were made of bone, and each had a unique Chinese character representing such things as birds, houses, dragons, seasons, and elements. In this version of the game, you match up tiles two at a time until all tiles are removed from the board (screen). It is harder than it seems (at least for players like Mike!) and requires quite a bit of strategy and concentration. Brenda plays it to relax.

SCOPE club leader, Bill Marsden, drove in from Dallas to demonstrate some stereo hardware and software. First, he had to remove the fast load cartridge since the SID cartridge occupied the same port. He made available the "Stereo Sid-Player 10.3" and scores of music files for anyone to copy. Bill admitted that he is a big music collector. You should see the space they claim on his drive! This outstanding little program has been the mainstay of C-64 and 128 music lovers for years. Using this program with the "Stereo Sid-Player" cartridge by Creative Microbiotics gives you true stereo from external speakers. Bill recommended hooking up an FM transmitter to your Sid cartridge and "broadcasting" your Sid music to an FM radio in your house. (Hey, maybe the club could go on the air?) The "Sid Player" plays synthesized or digitized music. One of the interesting features of this program is the ability to display words, musical notes, pictures, graphical bars, and a keyboard while

playing the music. Bill played the "Theme from Mission Impossible," "Piano Man," and even a Budweiser angelic sing-a-long, which was created with much gusto. He had one music disk called "A Twisted Christmas" that was really great. There was an angelic choir playing Christmas carols, then the music got a rock beat and the angels put on dark shades and started beating tambourines! The Three Stooges came in after each song, walking across the desert as the "Three Wise Men" (more like the three wise guys, nyuk, nyuk, nyuk). With each scene break, they see old "Burma Shave" style signs. Actually, the last sign recommends to take the savior some Burma Shave! One little ditty showed a sleigh flying across the rooftops pulled by several santas while Rudolph cracked the whip from the comfort of the sleigh. When the Three Stooges finally got to the manger, they got a pie in the face and someone said "Happy Hanukkah!"

The *Commodore Country Gazette* Volume 1: Issue 1 was handed out at the meeting. Most people had already seen this one, and were ready for Issue 2. (Ok already, Debbie Jackson has finished printing Issue 2, and it should be available at the next meeting!)

Does anyone know what happened to John and Julia Sookma? Back in April we heard that John wouldn't be making the next meeting due to a baby on the way. John, Julia, or baby...if you are listening, we want some pictures and stats!

This month's drawing was for *Z-Pilot*, a fun arcade game donated by Brenda. Jack, who's never had much interest in these games, won *Z-Pilot* and has since reported that he really enjoys playing it (especially since his high score is in the four-digit arena)

Be sure to join us next month for more help with your computer, and fun to boot!

The Fine Print

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Statement of Purpose: The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business.

Legal Stuff: The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Meetings and Membership: Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are \$24 per year or \$15 for six months. and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

The MCCC News

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Advertising: The MCCC News accepts two kinds of advertising. Member ads are those which are submitted by a member and which are not of a commercial nature. There is no charge for member ads. Commercial ads are those which advertise multiple like items for sale. Rates for camera-ready commercial ads are as follows for a single month or (prepaid consecutive three months): Full Page — \$36 (\$96); Half Page — \$18 (\$48); Quarter Page — \$12 (\$32); Business Card — \$6 (\$16). Materials to be inserted will cost \$.08 per copy (duplication not included) and must be inserted into all newsletters for the month.

Articles: Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles may be submitted as ASCII text or in Amiga *excellence!*, *ProWrite*, *WordPerfect* or *Final Copy* format. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS, to StarText, or submitted on disk. If these methods are not possible, I will, as a last resort, accept printed articles. If graphics need to be included they may be submitted as IFF files, DR2D, *PageStream* or *Art Expressions* structured drawings, *Professional Draw* clips or, again as a last resort, printed output.

Deadline: The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is 7am of the fourth Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail c/o Bill Raecke, 2614 Charolais Way, Arlington, Texas 76017.

Extra Copies: Extra Copies of the MCCC News are available at \$1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded with the required fee by the regular newsletter deadline.

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Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Tuesday	MCCC Board of Directors
2nd Tuesday	Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
2nd Saturday	Metro C-64/128 Chapter
3rd Tuesday	Amiga North Dallas Chapter
3rd Thursday	Amiga Central Chapter

SIGS

VidSIG	Chuck Johnson	817-478-7313
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug 2 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Aug 9 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Aug 13 Metro C-64/128 Chapter
1:30 pm — Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine
Lancaster & Camp Bowie, Fort Worth

Aug 16 Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — King of Glory Lutheran Church
6411 LBJ Freeway, Dallas

Aug 18 Amiga Central Chapter
7:30 pm — Arlington Community Center
2800 S. Center, Arlington

Sept 6 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm,
N.Richland Hills
Community Center,
Loop 820
at Rufe Snow



September Newsletter Deadline — 7am, August 24

These Dealers offer discounts to MCCC members
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